

Trail's End

Poems of New Mexico



By John Curtis Underwood

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War Flames.

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The Iron Muse.

Americans.

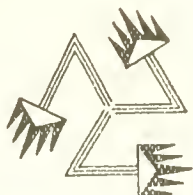
Literature and Insurgency.

Trail's End

By

John Curtis Underwood

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1921

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To
Two Women

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FOREWORD

My fathers tracked across the plains,
Forebears in heart, mayhap in blood,
To find this region that remains
Raised from the sea's salt flood.

They learned its highlands and its trails,
Its snow peaks and arroyos brown,
Its forests green, its misty veils
Rolling gray mountains down.

They knew blue skies of Paradise,
Its dry, clear air whose breath is life,
Its high rock bastioned ruins that rise
Hewed by a giant's knife;

Its gardens and its orchard trees,
Along the trenched acequia's flow,
Unfailing as its sun that sees
All things that smile and grow;

Where long, low, brown adobe walls
Leaning along the foot hills, climb;
Home of a brown skinned race that calls
With the slow smile of time.

This old, star-trailed Franciscan town
Where life is always afternoon,
Wrapped in its ragged robe of brown,
My fathers found one June.

BURROS

We met four burros in the streets of Santa Fe one steel blue morning,
 When snow on the mountains crept lower down trails they were
 treading.
 Two were gray, and two were brown to match the merchandise they
 marched with,
 Naked cedar split and frost rimed piled on gnarled brown pinyon
 wood,
 Bound round furry backs and flanks in huge wooden horseshoes.
 And the gray and brown small brothers of St. Francis plodded soberly,
 Turning corners of the long and crooked trail their fathers tracked
 from Burgos and Assisi,
 Trampling planks of tossing ships and foam swept beaches brown as
 Mexico,
 Treading where the padres tramped, on trails as brown as tattered
 robes that fluttered round them.
 They went stacked with stuff for fire that flamed far northward in
 strong sunlight.
 The padres' skin burned brown through torrid summers; their burros'
 hair grew long and thicker through bleak winters.
 And the flame that fired its human torches in Toledo, and leapt across
 the sea, harrassed them still and swept them with it.
 The brown padres sweated in the desert, and the burros walked be-
 side them bearing food and wine and water.
 The gray padres shivered on white mesas where their burros carried
 firewood, charcoal, and live coals in battered braziers.
 The burros carried crosses like their threadbare masters of slow
 martyrdoms,
 Uprights rough and cross bars crude, men rudely joined and set to-
 gether and raised.
 By bright springs and turbid rivers, on brown rocks and mountains
 meeting sunrise.
 They bore rude wooden symbols of a life that parched in deserts
 burned and thirsted with a yearning infinite;
 Warmed the dead to life, and dying lifted high a torch of red tradition
 that each padre's burning body raised from dying once more.
 And the burros beside the padres such as bore a Babe in Egypt,
 brought the crosses home to Santa Fe;
 Saw their shadows when they grew from earth; and lost them when
 men raised them higher;
 Heard the bells beside them chiming through three centuries of rhym-
 ing gray traditions.
 And they bore the little children of those dying years that laughing
 beat them with brown billets saved from crimson fires.
 Still they bear their timber horseshoes of good luck to all who conquer
 cold and hunger, with slight tools of light;
 Bearing split wood for sacrifice to faith that forms its crosses where
 two faggots set together light their fire on earth's bare altar.
 They bear brown laughing children where the brown cathedral's bells
 are chiming, rhyming still old rituals;
 Stepping soberly and slowly, small brown brothers of St. Francis,
 small gray guardians
 Of the splintered keys of sight, and love like his, like light, for
 sun and mountain, star and shadow;
 Burden bearers, high and holiest, like the lowliest and the least, bld
 or beast.

FLIVVERS

They come and stand in the Plaza and drink deep there,
 While their riders drink deep at our bubble fountains and soda
 fountains;
 Little tin tramps of the world with bulging side pockets and canteens,
 And bedding rolled and shouldered on roofs as deep in dust,
 As the bleached straw suit cases strapped behind and never opened
 From Lowell, Moline and Mobile to Santa Monica and San Diego.

Their women wear clothes like their men as often as not,
 Sweaters, riding breeches, miners' boots and faded khaki overalls,
 Hiding all from head to foot but sun-browned faces and sun-tanned
 fingers,
 Girls that have soaked in the sun and bathed in it in brown and
 hidden arroyos.
 Some of them sit in the Plaza with little hand mirrors and vanity
 cases and powder their faces.
 Some pencil letters and diaries, and some take time to stare
 At gray burros and brown adobes while their mothers are marketing,
 Big brown women and little wiry ones with bulging, faded, flowered
 knitting bags.

The flivvers stand fast or sulk to garages to be blacksmithed.
 Men with the trail's slow traces in browning faces,
 Of freedom from shop and farm and office desk and folio,
 Curb them, swing them away, feed them, groom them and bring
 them back
 Where the women and children are waiting.

Children whose eyes grow bright from miracles overnight,
 Crowding an epic into three months or four,
 Since they beat through spring rain and sleet and mud that was
 bottomless,
 On an endless old Santa Fé trail, and the rest like the streams of a
 water shed;
 Till the high plains passed one night, and the sun pulled out of the
 sky line
 A far, faint saw-toothed coast line of mountains that marched together,
 Marched and mounted in monstrous ranks till they looked like a wall
 at the end of the world.

There where the West begins they filed through the passes.
 And the women walked with the children up shortcuts to zigzags,
 To the wheel tracks on the summits; and they stared and wondered
 and went on,
 Slowly breathing the beauty of God's vast world at last revealed
 to them.

They moved on with it day by day, and grew used to it,
 Rolling closer to the westering sun, and camping nearer the stars
 night after night,

They met bleak mesas and buttes, they forded wide rivers of sand
 that sucked at the wheels.

They turned and twisted, rose and dipped, slewed and slipped past
 range after range in a maze of mountain wonderlands,

Where a man might lose himself utterly, and a woman go mad at
 the thought of it.

Slowly they lost the old selves of little tame tastes and futile hastes,
 As they dared the deserts and the snows through blue days like beads
 on the trail's brown rosary,

Till a thousand trails that converge from Old Mexico to Montana
 and Canada,

Met on the last brown slopes where bronchos at sun-up shy at girls in
 blankets like logs by the road.

They wanted water, oil and gas, ice cream and ice drinks and tense
 minutes at the movies again.

And some of them wandered into the past in our Palace and knew
 new mysteries.

They halt in our streets and refit, and some of us envy them,
 Who live on the roof of the world, and still hug chain gangs of habit,
 As they stutter away to the sunset with their faded and fluttering
 pennants,

And their dusty moving tents of Romance on various adventures.

And their eyes hold wider horizons, and their lips are wiser and
 warmer,

With their little human hopes and plans, and their hearts on the
 sun's high pilgrimage.

Santa Fé

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THE PLAZA

Motors weave their mazes around it.
 Motors stand empty and waiting for shopping women,
 Where dusty, high tilted, spliced and weather stained,
 Swaying and creaking, the lumbering ox wagons
 Rolled to the end of the Trail.

Cowboys' bronchos clatter over red brick pavements,
 Girls in sweaters, trim puttees, trig riding breeches,
 Tenderfoot girls in high-heeled shoes, khaki leggings and peek-a-boo
 waists,
 Red capped school girls two together, are riding bare back and
 circling,
 Where the gaunt chargers of the dust gray Conquistadores
 Limped and flinched from bits and spurs that propped them from
 falling.

Boys on bicycles glide and loop,
 Where the long pack trains of mules and pack horses plodded and
 slithered.
 Fledgling priests from St. Michael's with purple pennants and ribbons,
 Bound for a ball game go eating ice cream cones,
 Where the learned Padres tramped the long trail from Old Mexico.
 And the Padres' burros still stand here sleekly obsequient.

Indians sunburned red for a thousand years from Tesuque and San
 Ildefonso,
 With their red head bands and blankets of life glowing red in them,
 Flame past benches where bank clerks, cigar drummers, tourists, T-B's,
 Cough and chatter like apes, and chew black tobacco and big black
 war head lines,
 Passing proudly and imperially erect and self sufficient,
 As their free fore-runners were in the days when this place was the
 fore-court of a Pueblo capital.

The ghosts of those proud Pueblo days and the stark stone age be-
 fore it,
 Ghosts of the old dear idle days when men gossiped here of Marat
 and Napoleon,
 Ghosts of trappers of Taos and Jesuits of Rome whose eyes struck
 sparks like swords,

Ghosts of Forty-Niners who tarried to refit on their gold rush westward,
 Ghosts of Sibley's Confederates who gambled as wildly here for a continent,
 Ghosts of the gladdest girls who ever smiled at mountain sunrise or mandolin music;

Ghosts of the saddest widows and prostitutes who ever implored Our Lady of Pity,
 Ghosts of yesterday, before the railroad came, ghosts of desperados and their slayers, of Billy the Kid, and Pat Garrett,
 Ghosts of the day before yesterday, when the first trails that tied together here were faint as a dream's forgetfulness,
 Ghosts of Oñate and Benevides, of Casteñada, of Coronado and De Vargas,

Ghosts of Doniphan and Armijo, of Fremont and Kit Carson and Lew Wallace,
 Ghosts of fighters and writers and builders of low adobes and red brick abortions,
 Ghosts of the past and today and tomorrow, still fuse in this focus of living.

They live in the laughter of children that their fathers' fathers begot.
 They live in the smiles of women whose bodies and souls they worshiped and lusted for.
 They live in the looks of men that they loved and killed, and traded with and betrayed.
 They live in the houses they builded, the trees they planted, the turf they sodded, the pavements they laid here,
 In this gray meeting place of the winds of God and the wills of men for the feet of those that should follow them;
 Here where the trails meet and cross, as the paths in the Plaza meet and cross,
 In this fore-court of adventure by old camp fires of longing and forgetfulness;
 Where the ghosts gather with the living in the sunlight and moonlight,
 And the motors whirl like smoke, and the mountains stand sentry eternally.

Santa Fé

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THE OLD PALACE

It lies, a long, low procession of life epitomized, rough cast in adobe,
Like a slow and plodding line of old Spanish Conquistadores,
Straggling through dust and heat, dead beat footmen following sweat-
ing horsemen,

Trailing rusty lances idly, and leaving dusty furrows in the sand
behind them,

On the endless trail from Old Mexico to New Mexico.

They crept past brown and dry arroyos and bare and wind-swept
ridges,

Gray, dust gray, with the steel in them dulled and dented
By the bowlders the Indians hurled at them from the tops of the tall
terraced houses.

They crawled past beetling crags, and black mesas, and sombre
shadows of mountains that menaced them,

They stabbed the cactus with their spears and drank its life-blood to
sustain them, and pressed on past passes eternally unattainable;
Till they slaked their horses' dusty throats at last in the smooth gray
ripples of the Rio Grande del Norte.

They sweated past the sand hills on old trading trails of the Queres
and Tehuas,

They topped the last lean ridge, and watched a little river flowing
westward through a valley time had left for them,

Those that were left from the trail and the trail the desert had made
of them.

And they found peach orchards, and maize fields, and a Pueblo, and
a place for them;

For a hand of life had led them to build here a city and a home
for them,

They were the first forefingers of hands that wandered groping,
The first blunt forefingers of a tide that swept westward through the
ocean from bleak acres by Corunna and Santandar,

Down from the orange and pomgranate groves to the wilder gold of
the sunset,

Seeking room to spread and grow and glut its hunger insatiate for
gold and great adventuring,

Eddying north from narrower limits near the Gulf, to the uplands
of a widening continent.

And the desert took toll of them, but they pressed on and multiplied
until they taxed the desert.

They tithed it and ditched it and built homes for the spirit of the
 race that led them,
 Such as the Moors made and the Goths made when they met and
 mated in Spain.

And this old palace was the type and the chief of them.
 They made homes for flocks and herds such as followed with the
 Indians and women when Coronado marched from Mexico,
 As they made homes for earlier folk migrations of all herdsmen
 through the centuries,
 First made a corral, then a square and a frontage of tenting for the
 face of it.

And the corral and the tenting grew to a courtyard and a patio with
 shaded arcades,
 Such as the Moors made in Cordoba with rows of tent poles for their
 first slim pillars,
 The Spanish captains and governors came to herd and pasture their
 people here,
 And they made a greater sheep-fold and a Great House for the herd-
 ing, and the people called it El Palacio—.

It stands as gray as the sheep with tree trunk pillars brown as
 stripped posts of corrals.
 Made of the same sun-dried mud that the older herders and builders
 wrought with,
 Long and broadly based, primitive and significant as a pueblo or a
 pyramid,
 Where time made it a gray and lasting monument of a race that
 passed and yet lives here.
 It stands a tomb of the past, and a treasure house of gray traditions
 and hidden histories.

It stands like an old gray college or cloister in Toledo or Salamanca.
 More than tomb or college or cloister it embodies the past and inter-
 prets it,
 With the leaves of its libraries, the ticking of its typewriters, the
 calling of its telephones talking to today and tomorrow.
 And the brown, ranked pillars of its long arcade are the pillars of
 proud triumphal arches.
 The great ghosts of the past stride through them, and then stand
 back again and mingle
 With the natives and the tourists, and the painters and poets and
 lovers in the Plaza in the moonlight who linger and love it.

THE FRIJOLES ROOM

They made an echo of antiquity
 Of the room where Lew Wallace wrote Ben Hur in the early Eighties,
 With his leather covered Morris chair and leather covered lap board
 on its arms by one window.
 And the shadows work on it, and shadows of a time as old as Jerusalem
 Move in the place or rest like the words of a finished manuscript.

They fill the low show cases in the corners,
 And two huge wall cases hewed from a three-foot adobe partition.
 They flow through low doors in walls as thick at each end of the room,
 In a low and narrow vista of door on door receding
 Through the whole past of the Palace to shadowy doors before them.

They lie on white wooden shelves and wide surfaces,
 Shadows of the past solidified in hand-worked bone and stone,
 Shadows in hanging trays of glass like X-ray prints of the bones of the
 past,
 Skeleton fragments of the days when the caves of Tyuonyi were hand
 carved and crowded,
 Bone awls for ghostly garments, bone flutes for ghostly music,
 Stone arrow heads, spear heads and cherts for shadowy huntings
 and killings.

There are deep shadows on rank on rank of stone axe heads and
 hammers,
 Line on line of the story of the felling of trees and the wedging of
 vigas for balconies,
 Where shadowy women gossip and scold and walk on the face of
 the cliff,
 And children whose bodies have crumpled are playing on ladders
 whose substance is dust.
 There are hard shadows of stone hand mills where girls ground blue
 corn.
 And the crude stone quern still holds dull shadows of the rhythm of
 the rubbing that caressed it,
 Where they bent brown breasts to it, that swelled as they sang to it,

There are round shadows of smooth black stones one could hide in
 her palm as she polished pottery.

There are shadows in the big flat bowls of gray and white and brown
 and russet,
 Where the life of a tribe that was, has slowly burned through the clay.
 There are bowls whose circle is broken like the circle of feasters
 that dipped from them.
 There are patterned shards like fragments of lives men pattern out
 piece by piece.

There are shadowy shafts of arrows and hand-carved stones for their
 smoothing,
 Shadows of the craft of old men who fashioned and fitted and flew
 with them.
 There are throwing sticks and praying sticks and prayer plume
 holders of clay.
 There are brown and white turkey feathers intact, and strange
 ornaments
 For the great high cave of the kiva deep-niched in the cliff,
 Like a lost high altar of living in a ghostly cathedral whose transepts
 are builded in air.

There are shadows of shadowy symbols of dead rituals,
 Shadows of the dancers' plumes that felt brown feet that felt high
 ladders,
 And the hard, brown rocks of the valley when life was vivid and
 good to them;
 Till the last lone fire at the foot of the cliff died out on a dead
 black winter's night,
 And the last lost wailing echo of living sang to it,
 And to life that writes in shadowy symbols, broken pictures, dying
 men and gospels misspelled,
 In Tyuonyi even as Jerusalem.

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THE ALCOVE

The light streams down from above through a gray wire glass sky light,
 Like cloudy light that falls in a shadowy sea cave,
 Where pearls and corals glow, and abalones slowly open living opals,
 Near flame-tipped sea shells, obscured by sea-green sea weed and
 great red sea fans,
 Under the feathery shimmering shifting of frondage, water, color and
 light,
 The hard, brown rock stands out like tie ribs of being.

The ocean shimmers through the hues of translucent canvases;
 In a stirless tide of air that floods the Grand Canyon's terraced
 abysses,
 Through frail and rifted veils of mist that drift apart and reveal;
 Opals and pearls and dead red spoils of fossil centuries,
 Far-flung treasure of Titans washed by the waves
 Round points and bays and hazy purple coasts of sunset and sunrise.

It beats round the high piled massive of the silent mountains of Taos,
 Like a tall sea island rising between the tide and the sky,
 Out of a great gray plain toward the cloud drift of spent whirlwinds,
 Eddying, swirling slowly till the hills lift up their hands,
 And strain down snow and rain that the spring may blossom again.
 And the rocks that wrestle with heaven for a parapet for far plains,
 Stand in strong blues and sage grays as a strong sea island stands
 through ages.

The ocean rises and flowers again in April through new fruit trees,
 Ghosts of dead seas and seasons that spread and lapped through the
 valleys rise with the swelling of sap.
 Apple trees blossom in spray, and peach trees raise pink swirls of fire.
 Below them snow still lingers in blue shadows as polar as shades of
 icebergs in sea lanes,
 In the lee of the low gray adobes with red peppers still hanging by
 the doors.

The ocean moulded the walls of these churches,
 Of Ranchos de Taos that stands like a rock sea-flung by Spain towards
 the north and the mountains,
 Weathered and rounded, storm beaten by years,
 Of the shadow netted Sanctuario by Chimayo,

Soaking in light in the hills like a sponge that clings to the cleft of
 a reef;
 And of the brown cathedral corner tower in Santa Fé,
 Like a crumbling shore rock bastion of a faith today forgotten more
 and more.

The ocean moulded the growth of flat acres of grease weed,
 Like a low sea forest raised from the ooze to the sunlight,
 Where salt gray waves once rippled and slowly drained away.
 The ocean shaped the trees that veil and reveal wide mountain vistas,
 Poplars pointed like rocks and cottonwoods spreading like sea weed,
 With fingers of tides in the veins of each leaf, and the spreading of
 eddies in circles concentric of years hid in gray trunks.

The ocean moulded the hand and the mind of the man who made
 these pictures,

Out of its salt spring of being that knows not dying or dry rot,
 That ripples and wells through the ages of sunlight and starlight and
 moonlight.

It moulded and made and sent him to silently preach to the people,
 In this small side chapel of service unceasing in today's gray cathedral,
 Where men light pictures to God instead of candles and lamps,
 Silently preaching the rhythm and the flow and the glow of the tides
 of all living

Till the hand of the painter is dust, and his mind is a mist in the
 midnight,

And the gleam of the strength in his soul like a pearl in a sea cave
 In a gray little alcove of time is a treasure of light that remains.

Santa Fé

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PALACE UNDERTAKING PARLORS

Late at night, next to the post office,
A huge square window with one crack in it gapes darkly,
Like the black mouth of a cave of death where silence whispers
All lost horrors of the past, and today's last hopelessness.

Two green shaded lamps like the eyes of a monster that menaces,
Look past undrawn shades for people that pass in the street,
Passing oblivious, restless, foreboding, horror-seized
Hundreds and thousands of times, at noon and at midnight,
To come here, sooner or later.

By those two lamps two men are sitting, keeping watch,
Always someone sitting, keeping watch,
Smoking, yawning, saying little and listening
For the tense ringing of a nerve-racked telephone,
Spring and summer, and autumn and winter.

This is the gate of despair, and of dreams that are nightmares.
And here the dead go first when they begin
The long, dark journey into deeper darkness,
Down a black funnel that narrows faster and faster
Through the grave's close trap-door to utter forgetfulness.

The men who sit here learned their craft in Egypt before the Pyramids.
They have made mummies before, and their eyes and their lips
Look out of the living mummy cases and whisper tonelessly,
As the priests of the dead at Luxor and Thebes whispered at night
as they worked;
Taking the senseless shapes that women bore and loved, and men
married and traded with,
Hiding horror and disease and the taint of tears in soft wrappings
of silence.

People who lie awake with nerves that twitch, go by and shudder.
But a child pauses and looks at the two green lights and longs
for them.
And a man with a heart like a cracked egg shell, edges night after
night nearer the great cracked window glass,
Finding there before him the rest that he craves and needs,
Knowing that in all the world this one dim room belongs to him.
And his tired heart tells him,
Death is one breath in an endless march of interminable atoms;
Through night's long passionless ecstasy.

THE CORNER DRUG STORE

The children love to come here,
To sit on high wire stools before the big mirror,
To hear the soda fountain sizzle and squirt,
To play with straws and bubbles in tall glasses,
And swallow frozen ecstasy by lingering spoonfulls.

Here is one place where all are children,
At one time or another, sooner or later,
Sundays or holidays, particularly so
Since the town and the state went dry last October.

We are children before the news stands between two big front
windows,
Like a flashy display of children's toys at Xmas time,
Where we see ourselves mirrored in toy magazines for toy people,
And cheaper Sunday papers from Denver and Los Angeles.

We are children at the candy counter.
We are children in a corner near the big mirror,
Stocked to start ten beauty factories, wholesale; working overtime,
With lip sticks and potted rouge, cold creams and face washes,
Talcum powder, radium soap, liquid shampoo, hair removers,
Blue Jay corn plasters, rubber reducers, electric vibrators,
And superfluous vanity bags for superfluous women,
Little walking vanity bags themselves of small envies and appetites,
And small spoiled children.

Tragedy walks here too among the children,
As a huge cowman or sheriff's deputy walks with a six-gun half hidden.
Tragedy comes on tiptoe to a telephone and whispers tensely.
Tragedy stands twitching by a prescription counter watching his
watch.

Tragedy smiles thin-lipped at a friend, and stifles a cough,
Hurrying away with a bottle of Scott's Emulsion hidden in a muff.
Tragedy feels a truss, and hungrily watches the children.
Tragedy comes with a face no sane man might marry, and frowns
at them:

At the children for whom all our drugs and vanities are devised,
The children for whom we close saloons and nursery windows, and
make war and peace,
The children who come here as their elders come here;

From lonely ranch houses, shadowed adobes, furnished rooms, hotel
lobbies, toy town houses,
To buy aspirin and frayed aspiration in a rag time phonograph record,
To buy patent medicines and patent appliances for killing time and
ring worms and cockroaches,
For curing boils and boredom, faciat defects and soul insufficiencies;

To our temple of gossip and healing of all ills real and imaginary,
To sit on a stool by a counter and swing their legs as the children do,
To see life a spectacle and a drama, half guessed and half hoped for,
To watch it without them and in them in a great big mirror before
them—

On Sundays—and weekdays—and holidays.

ROSARIO'S

At the end of the street, on the roof of the shop, backed by blue sky,
An old gray Mexican ox-cart stands on solid wheels hand-sawed from
logs that sawed the desert.

Below in the ghost shop's windows are wampum and arrow heads,
Spear heads and cherts of flint and black obsidian, bleakly mingled
With Navajo bracelets and rings beaten and punched from dead
Mexican dollars.

Pottery rain-gods with eyes of dead men peer at you.

Inside in deep shadows are piles of dusty blankets,
Woven by long dead hands that paled as the wool sucked out
All the color from old lives till the last red thread was lost in grayness.
Long lost Navaho sheep and Mexican flocks near Chimayo
Fed and their blood beat red, and these stripes and wedges are left
of them.

Snow and midnight mix in one and the colors of springtime and sunset
Live in a rainbow web of wool that Rosario spreads on the floor.

Pottery from Zuni, Zia, Acoma, Laguna, clutters the dusty tables,
With painted shadows of flowers and leaves and birds and chain-
lightning.

Great black lustrous jars from San Juan and Santa Clara overshadow
Hopi ladles and bowls, yellow and brown like the rocks of the mesas.
Heavy stencil-like patterns of fire and night from San Ildefonso and
San Domingo mix

With crude Tesuque ash trays and little clay birds and animals,
Striped, smeared, absurd, wierd, and naively bewitching,
And black and gray prehistoric bowls unglazed, crooked, coil-woven.

There are baskets hanging from rafters, baskets on floor and walls;
Big Navaho marriage baskets with their mountains of upper and lower
worlds,

Black and white trays, Pima and Apache, spotted with shapes of
small men and Gila monsters,

Hopi plaques, coarse of weave, some low-keyed, and some like fire
and sapphire,

Rotting bottoms of baskets made by hands that died a thousand years
ago.

And two frayed sandal heels of yucca fibre from an Otowl mummy a
thousand years older.

Painted saw-edged dance sticks ending in birds and burros crowd
 Buckskin and bead-tagged pouches and purses in dusty show cases.
 Hopi Kachinas, masks and dolls, and shamans' dead magic are jumbled
 With carved and tinted tablitas, tall wooden tiaras for dances of
 dead men,
 And dead children's tufted rattles like slim war clubs of dim warriors
 with dyed hide sewn on them.

In a corner a tall war drum blue and yellow as bare torsos of dead
 dancers,
 Stands beside a scarred metate that ground ghosts' blue corn and
 yellow corn.
 There are horse hair quirts and leather quirts and belts of long dead
 riders,
 With the wicked Mexican spurs and the silver bossed and the braided
 bridles,
 And saucers filled with beads and coral, turquoise and opal and
 Mexican money.

There is a huge old dusty safe that Rosario opens slowly,
 Where he hides dim writings of men long dead, and trinkets and
 jewels of long dead women,
 Names written large in three races' history, and mystery magnetized
 and tangible,
 In great Navaho silver bead necklaces with squash flower spurs,
 and in crosses and swastikas,
 Worn gold for fleshless fingers, and thin ear-loops for ears that
 hear nothing.

He has old seals that stamped power on yellow papers,
 Cut by Greeks in Rome in the image of Rome's first emperors,
 And one that came down through a pope and a king and a viceroy,
 reveals Rosario's profile,
 Hard and shrewd and old as a Latin and an Indian, and loving all
 things
 That have gray power in themselves to make their keepers fit for them.
 And Rosario stands with his ghosts in his hands like a priest of the
 past,
 And a ghost of the pride and the power of Spain and the Pueblos that
 perishing persist here.

SAN MIGUEL

The old Catholic college has a gray stone front of many windows.
 And I sometimes wonder where the eyes are that looked out of them,
 Little fledgling priests that were homesick often and lonely,
 Knowing as little of the world as a babe unborn and resenting it.

Compline, vespers and matins, and the length of interminable litanies,
 Fasts and penance and prayers, forever, one after the other,
 Midnight masses and early wakings in winter, and stories and lessons
 to be learned
 Of saints in torment, tormented by a God men worshipped tormenting
 them,
 Stories that spoiled the summer sun, and made the spring a mockery.

The little boy priests went harnessed in black and harrassed
 By memories of autumn days when apples dropped in their mothers'
 laps,
 Long mornings on mountains when they found the pinyon nuts and
 pitched their fingers husking them,
 Days when they watched lean horses and colts like a merry-go-round
 on shining circus days, thrashing dry wheat,
 When dust and chaff hung high in air in yellow beams of sunlight
 dancing for them.

They have gathered ripe grain for the threshing in the chapel and
 the cloisters,
 Where gray faced priests go round and round, black shadows of God
 and shamans of midnight,
 Pondering a pit of eternity, and heirs to all the terrors and torments
 of the ages.
 And the dim contagion grows where they shut up boys beside them,
 And drive lean horses of habit round and round, day by day on their
 lives.

The old Catholic college is a gray barracks of bitterness.
 But birds build nests around it, the sun and moon regard it,
 As it looks across the valley to old gray stone walls of the State
 Penitentiary.
 And I like better to think of eyes looking out of its windows at birds
 winging to the mountains,
 Than of the downcast lids that serve life sentences to habit here,
 For worshiping shadows ceaselessly and wronging life with frayed
 rituals.

THE OLDEST CHURCH

There was a cross in the open here where the Padres planted Christ's
standard,
Dusty foot-soldiers of Spain and her church taking possession of the
land.

There was a cross of wood and a new strange shadow on the hills,
And a deepening shade in the minds and wild hearts
Of the Pueblos and nomads who watched it and hated it.

There was a cross of metal in old San Miguel
Before the Pilgrims set foot in the fog at Provincetown.
There was a cross of metal in a cage of sun-dried mud,
A cage that was made when metal first was forged and before it,
When the first cavemen builders roofed raw trenches, and carved
their rude dugouts.

There was a cage of shadows here, and the Indians hated it.
And they loved their kivas better, and there was bloodshed here,
When the great Pueblo rebellion rose in a long brown tidal wave,
And they stoned the priests and martyred them, and the robes of the
mass were rent and defiled,
Where a sunbeam brightens a gray clay wall, and a motor glides
past the last of the Trail to the Plaza.

There was a cross of metal in the sword hilt of each Conquistador
Who came and held the land and heard bronze bells and ate God's
body here,
In metal armor that gleamed in the light of tall pale guttering
candles.
And the men and the metal swords and lances, bits and spurs that
rode the land and rowelled it
Are lost like yesterday's snow, and these old mud walls and carved
roof beams outwore them.

There is a cross of wood in the open here on the tower of old San
Miguel,
Crowning a church like a slice of deeply eroded gray cliff or great
clay bank,
With two stone slanting buttresses against the time-worn face of it,
Propping the walls of a tomb of the past with flowers like canticles
growing in front of it,
A crumbling tomb in an older dome of God's blue beauty embracing it.

THE HAT SHOP

There is a telephone pole near the First National Bank that the horses have chewed.

Puye was standing tied there one day as I rode round the Plaza. I pulled up Gray Leg and peered past the leaf-sprayed shade of the hat shop window.

Some one was standing inside with her profile pointing to a mirror, As Mike Armijo's pointer Lal stands when she flushes a bird.

Some one was standing inside with one finger fussing with her curly hair,

In a brown leather hunting coat, tan riding breeks and wrap-puttees as symmetrical

As the sweet, slim curves their close spirals defined and clung to, Some one with a hat in her hand and four more on the counter beside her,

Some one all curves that clung, and melted and mingled in motion that sang to me.

She lifted the first, and she seemed to kiss and caress her small head with it.

Kings have been crowned with less splendor and pleasure in living. She laid the red hat aside, and the blue and yellow and lilac and black, and they all looked well on her.

And she frowned a little and dimpled and smiled, and they all looked well on her.

She sang a little softly, and shuddered at a hat of furred horror in the mirror behind her,

As forest things stooping and drinking from a river, shiver at fear in monstrous fur that is mirrored close behind them.

While she debated I discovered frontiers of the forest in the hat shop, With its bare hat forms like empty bird nests scattered about it.

While she fluttered by the mirror like a bird that preens itself before a pool that smiles at it,

I believed that the first hats for women were singing birds' nests, With a plume or two thrust through one side as they tried them on, Naked and flushed and smiling as children who first discover beauty, As they discovered their own images in pools that smiled at them, and barely knew them.

THE TEA ROOM

There used to be a red parrot swingng over the doorway.
 Time and the winds outwore it.
 Now all the parrots are inside, but Vera Deane insists
 They come with new novels in their muffs, and they go with stale
 gossip in their mouths
 "My dear, you musn't quote me, but between you and me and that
 telephone pole"—

Some day a younger Homer will write an epic of small-town telephones.
 They borrow the use of hers and she doesn't like it.
 When she is busy behind the screen they start new scandals.
 And the red parrots on the walls and chintzes chatter and sneer at
 them.
 And the green parrots on the hand bells preen their painted feathers
 and grin at them.

She brings us tea in yellow cups on red and green tables.
 Over the mellow brew they perpetrate eternal platitudes,
 And scatter little dry social lies as they crumble bread and cake crumbs.
 They sip straw-colored complacency for the tame little snobs that
 they are.
 And their souls are as brittle as china they chip, the lying little souls
 that they are.

She has made us a clearing house of small lies and smaller jealousies,
 That she sells with her candies and her cakes, that we do not suf-
 ficiently thank her for.
 For lies must be cleared as coffee must be cleared before the truth
 in them is fit to lie awake with.
 And the wives clack back to their men at home and treat us more
 humanly for it.
 And I saw a prettler girl, even than V. D. there yesterday,
 And our tea room that tagged four divorced last year, has mothered
 eight weddings this winter already.

Santa Fé

10 22 18

THE BANK

They have gutted the Bank Saloon and sold the stock.
 But they left the big game heads, and the glassy eyes look down
 Where big men clinked down big silver dollars with big guns belted
 to them,
 And drank big drinks of forty rod, and filled their hip pockets.

They had strong stuff like dynamite to get quick action when it was
 needed.
 When the West was one great construction camp, and shoot slugs in
 strong men's guts;
 To bore through blizzards with them, when the fit stood up and
 survived,
 And the weak went to hell in a hurry, and a man tied tight to his
 friend.

Big men started big things here and planned bigger ones.
 The army went and the cowmen came, prospectors plunked down
 nuggets,
 And juggled quartz with sparks in it that set eight states afire,
 And harnessed railroads to cities, and ditched and harvested deserts.

Shades of the shaggy old timers, trappers, hunters and trailsmen,
 Section hands, congressmen, cowboys, governors, mule skinnners,
 sheriffs, miners, state senators,
 Linger here and look at shop girls with curls like Mae Marsh
 Wrapping up boxes of candy fresh from Chicago for lungers from
 Boston in sombreros.

A cigar clerk watches two high school pool room boys piking at a
 punch-board by a soda fountain, formerly a bar,
 And school girls dancing with the grandmothers between movie shows
 at the Paris,
 On the floor where the tenderfeet walked in the air to the sound of
 the bullets splintering planks,
 In this place that they call a cabaret, which is French today for a
 rubber-stamped dance hall.

THE GARAGE

The gray stucco garage lies just back of the Plaza.
 By the doors are two gay painted birds that the Pajarito cave men
 put on pottery.
 Inside is a prison for speed with two greasy pits where they torture it.
 And a boy at a vise on a grimy bench is filing new links for its fetters.

The boy at the bench has broken bronchos
 And he feels as often as not that his motor cars are alive,
 On his flat gray greasy stable floor standing still for him,
 And lolloping by outside and ripping and snorting.

He thinks it is great to bridle something that bucks
 With stuff that is stronger than rope or rawhide and cinch it.
 He has been here only six weeks and he hasn't had time to get
 homesick
 For the far dim ranges at dawn and the wind on the warpath.

It feels good to be here in the hot throbbing heart of the town,
 To set a turn buckle on things, and to mix up with every one's life
 To make of speed a modern commodity as simply sold
 As the water one turns on and off in any one's bath room.

Out in the old livery stable yard they are staking an extension,
 And burning up rickety stable hacks and sun-warped carriages,
 That carried the passion and pathos of the past, and its crime and
 adventuring.
 Through fifty years of the days that are done to its homes and hotels
 and the trains and the state capitol.

New York

10 29 19

THE SWIMMING POOL

There is a swimming pool in an orchard on a side hill,
 With a rough stone rim around it, and limpid laughing water running
 and diving
 From a sun-lit irrigation ditch, splashing and flashing into it.

The trees grow close around it and shelter and shade it,
 Red barked apple trees, red as the clay of the path that tiptoes down
 From the house where the girls are hidden, and the morning breath-
 lessly waits for them.

Sunrise lingers to see them running lightly on tiptoe,
 Slim as two boys in their trim boys' bathing suits that cling to them,
 Down the red path where white apple petals fall on them lingering.

Birds in the branches sing to them, the lights and the shadows bring
 to them,
 Something soft as a butterfly's touch, and the swish of flowers and
 dew on swift bare arms and feet,
 Feeling earth and air as they fleet; and the flicker of wings, of leaves
 and of light all thrill in them.

Branch tips touch them brushing by, breezes clutch their lips and their
 hair.
 The color of the sky and the scent of the day is sweet to them while
 she still is a girl to greet them.
 And the water ripples to meet them, and splashes and flashes and
 dimples and plays with them.

The sun climbs high to spy on them and to dry their hair as side
 by side
 They sit on the round stone rim of the pool with their little toes
 tickling the water.
 And they laugh at the light and new nests in the trees and a little
 gray kitten that crawls to them.

The snow of the mountain comes closer today like the warmth of the
 spring to them,
 Like the buds that burst, the petals that fall, the sap that rises, the
 grass that grows, the breeze that blows, the scent and the song
 that flows to them,
 And every spring of all time is a pulse that quickens, a voice that
 wakens, a smile that trembles in them.

For life today in Santa Fé on the last day of April,
 Is a girl half naked and wholly happy smiling and sunning herself
 On the mountain rim of a world of light and the sky's high bright
 blue swimming pool.

THE STUDIO

There is a great gray north window and a big red brick open fire place,
With a noble red brick shelf above the fire hole bearing pipes, Hopi
and Tesque pottery, rain gods and ash trays.

There are coal black jars of San Juan with pussy willows in them on
the adobe window ledge,

And a painted jar from Zia crowded with brushes to the right of them,
Between them red, blue, yellow, and speckled ears of corn and twisted
paint tubes,

And beyond them a hillside of snow and a sky too gray for painting.

On a small table by the fire stands a green typewriter backed by a
yellow placque from the Second Mesa.

A larger table by the window is stacked with books, papers, ink,
tobacco, hunting knives and photograph prints and plates.

There are two tall easels splashed with paint in front of a desk and
a gramophone cabinet.

One of them bears a thumb box sketch of a canyon road with a big
blue mountain beyond it;

And that road goes winding away all night and day to new wonder-
lands.

One of them carries a great brown picture of the Pueblo at Santa
Clara,

With three clay bee hive ovens in the foreground grouped like three
mountain peaks.

And the blue and green mountains beyond them carry the lines and
contours of the Pueblo roof line to the sky line.

There are streaky shadows of vigas, and slanting ladders and scaffolds
like well sweeps.

And the blue of a rifted sky comes back to blue shadows that seep
through the ground.

A black and white dog sprawls slack by a fire that smoulders gray
and black.

A man in khaki with a brindled cat in his lap writes on blue paper.

A man with a grizzled beard and a big pipe in it clatters at his table
in the corner.

For today is too gray to paint in his laboratory of light in the hills.
The experiment smoulders like the fire while he fusses with old
photograph plates.

Till the sun brings out new and brighter precipitates dripping from
the tips of his brushes,

And the lenses of his eyes clear, as the great lens of the sky clears.

CASA PINTADA

Around the long table with two stained wood benches,
 We sat and ate and drank and spread out books and pictures;
 Indian colored drawings inevitably authentic,
 And tags of last year's New Art, already stale and ludicrous.

We opened books for two years with little wrangling.
 252 volumes of New Poetry stacked on shelves or slung in corners,
 22 varieties of monthlies, weeklies, dailies and quarterlies dribbling
 and quoting it.
 We read proofs and smiled, or pinned ribald rhymes to them.

Poets and painters darkened the doors or tapped on the windows,
 Poets cleaned pipes in corners, or orated in full focused candle light.
 Poets and painters debated of Art and its Mission and their Mission
 interminably.
 Poets lounged on the porch, and looked at sunsets and stars, and
 silently escaped to them.

One of them taken to task concerning his own stolid egotism,
 Discoursed of painted women, painted houses, painted poets and
 painted painters briefly.
 "The virtue of this gray adobe in the mountains", he said
 "Is not the red strips of paints and the framed paint patterns on
 the walls.

"It is a house of life on the loma, for all its frivolities.
 "People live here and grow, and come and go, and remember it.
 "People are better than poems, and houses are better than pictures.
 "Homes are better than art shops, and whoever talked shop in a
 dream?"

THE OLD BELLS

Two old bells hanging in a garden back of the Sisters' Sanitarium, Swung on a gray wood frame the height of my ears and my eyes. I had passed them a hundred times before, and never discovered them. One day from Gray Leg's back beyond the old adobe wall I watched and wanted them.

Old bells that are silent make the most beautiful music,
Like lips that are dead and loved and kissed by time's slow shadows,
By the tender touch of the years and their children remembering
Something that dies and yet lives in the soul of all silences.

They thrill to the clangor of old days when they flung far their
challenge,
Heralds of the high God of Spain to the tribes of the hills and high
plains,
Tolling the people to prayers and dead masses for the dying.
Calling brown kinsfolk to weddings, they clapped their bronze heels
as they danced.

They live at the summit of life and then sank to quiescence,
Time has left them alone with the flowers and the winds and the sun
To whisper back to the birds, and ring back muted centuries,
When the snow falls softly and stirs them, or a butterfly poises on a
bell.

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THE BLIND WOOD CHOPPER

Where the Acequia Madre glides like a snake below the road,
In the shadow of a low adobe stable and a pile of logs man-high,
Blg and brown, rotting and charred, with ridges of snow on their
spines,

Backed by a cone-shaped foot-hill, through two spider fingered trees;

I saw a shape like an ape in stained overalls,
Crouching low at the end of a cross cut saw as long as himself.
He leaned on it, swaying it awkwardly, playing strange music,
With the rending of ore from rock and the crash of falling trees in it,
Till his big fiddle bow of steel had swept the last wet cutting away.

He laid the end of the log on the chip packed ground like a headless
idol.

He seemed to kneel before it as his clean axe rose and fell,
Its keen edge always in line with a line through the middle of his
head, his spine and his hands.

And the line through the middle of each round and half and quarter
log was as clean

As the cleavage, timed and exact, of close set machinery.

When he had finished his stint he felt for his faggots and got up
with them.

He went on over the water wltth one foot so close to the edge of
the bridge,

Where no guard rail was, that I wanted to call out to him.

Children going to school passed him and followed him,
Making no more of him than the snow on the hills or the mud on the
road,

Where my ape-man at last, erect and assured, was rounding the turn
of the road.

ARTURO

He wears a smeared red sweater.
His faded blue overalls gape at the knees.
His shoes are shaky.
His hat is dusty and black and half holes.

He walks into our kitchen and sniffs at it.
He walks into our dining room and looks at me.
He says to me, "Hello, hello, you bueno?"
And religiously I salute him in turn,
"Hello, Arturo, you bueno?"

His eyes are big and black.
His lips are large and Latin.
His nose is large and fit for smelling at
Meals his sister, Rosario, makes for us.
His face is large and it needs to be washed.
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,
Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

His years are four and a half.
His face is the face of a masterful lover of living,
Wise without knowing it, equal to everything,
Slowly alert and sufficient to time and itself.
His stare is the stare of youngest New Mexico,
Pondering life in a puddle of sunlight,
Wondering what we painters and poets in Canyon Road make of it,
And what all this big world is about.

His eyes are two round interrogation points.
His voice is the echo of an older wisdom.
And I know some day or other,
When I am half the world away from Santa Fé,
In some land of the Latins where life is a matter of minutes and
seconds, and centuries,
I shall see and hear him.

I shall have him coming, standing, pondering, questioning,
Like a lesser Pan and a faun and a hybrid of pixies and cherubim;
With his black eyes of life, and his small voice of life that insists
and persists.
I am sure that at last I shall answer his slow repetition
"Hello, hello, you bueno, you bueno?
Arturo".

THE YELLOW KIVA

There is a sprawling yellow kiva in our little town,
With a ground plan looking like a great lop-sided H, stenciled by
tribal tradition.

On forty-eight states, here and there, East and West, in ideographs
crudely inconclusive.

Some of us say it stands for hell today; some have a hope it may
mean heaven.

The cliff dwellers may have known better when they made their
kiva capitals:

Round, low-rattled, intimate, with room for a hearth fire in the midst.
We have tiled our larger lodges with tainted ballots, talking paper,
dirty green backs, louder yellow backs.

Our State Capitol puts up a front; and falls down, when you look at
it behind, like most Americans.

We have paid too much paper money and hard money for wide stair
cases and long and lofty corridors,

Building a sounding box of Babel full of pigeon holes of purpose
weakly standardized;

Dusty office rooms where time clock type writers transcribe quantity
production; we have made the place a mill

For little shoddy private grafts, and public grabs of a state's greater
greediness.

Boy orators orate in our Senate and our House; paid interpreters
translate through two languages,

Latin to Nordic, and Nordic to Latin; Spanish and English mix as
they can;

Smelting man, and metals unmined; tongues of smothered fire tire
ears unresigned

To the endless wasting of words and time paid for, and loose power
in our mountain power house.

Sometimes it seems the old kivas were better, with their hearth-fires
for our fevered haste; and their well-weighed sentences,

As the peace pipe passed, of wise men who spoke, pondering their
words, face to face;

Without middlemen or scare heads to exploit or distort the sense of
the tribe and its purpose in time.

Sometimes it seems God Almighty's prize fools are those wisecracs
in Washington who would civilize the Indian.

We were going away, and looked back at that power house of machine
waste planted on our plateau.

Over it floated, faded in warm sunlight, the flag that means most to us,
time-stained and rubber stamped;

Like one tattered wing of freedom we must fly with; somehow; some-
where; somehow we remembered

The old kivas' flag tipped ladders—till man's Ladder lifted there.

THE PARIS

Paris blazed by night, bridging San Francisco Street.
Through part of the war we watched it and worried a little.
By day the letters paled in the beauty of the mountain west of it.
And Paris and the war were five thousand miles away from us.

We had not thought of the Paris of cow punchers and counter jumpers,
Fauning a cayuse through forty miles of moonlight, and wallowing
desperately
Out of gray ruts of shop aisle and street, and dreamless staring and
sleeping,
Or of the Paris of the old who have been there, and may not go back.

In a cold cave of germs where ill-washed people coughed and flirted
Once we saw Olive of the Studios caught in a great gray spider web
That some one flashed a light on, and she shook it with her posturing,
(Like live bait in a trap to tempt other girls like herself,
And a mannequin ghost for furs, frocks and motors they framed
her in,)

Never to emerge from the net of quick returns, in color and light,
A voice that sang when it spoke, and a warm and vibrant reality,
Truer than herself and the startled hearts of her hearers.

"It's the Easiest Way all over again", said Irene. "Let's get out
of this".

So for a year we soaked ourselves in the sun and snow on the
mountains.

And we passed the Paris at times with eyebrows lifted and slightly
superior,

We who knew Paris and the arts, and all men publish about them.

Thanksgiving night Pershing's Crusaders compelled us.
And something rose in our souls, and pushed its way and thudded
Through the pulsing hearts of the rest that pushed the Huns from
Paris,

With shoulder thrusts at spaded earth, and beams bridging ruined
rivers,

That rippled in a tide of living and lifted us.

Suddenly we perceived the purpose of this playhouse of starved people,
We who had starved for the great free swing of something high as
the stars;

People who strive for Paris and the child in their hearts two nights
 a week;
 People who howl at custard pies slapped in your face, and are more
 avid for adventure,
 Even for farcial and thrilling acrobatics, than the vapidness of trade
 vampires,
 Thrilling a little to filmed wickedness of underworlds waked in
 themselves and sickening of film sentiment.

We saw how stark contrast of light and shade come first in the
 ground and growth of things,
 Where the roots of the soul still struggle in the ruts and mud of the
 road,
 For earth had eyes before ears, and howls and shrieks before cadenced
 voices and muted imaginings,

And Centaurs, Vikings, Attilas and Punchinellos, before Paris; and
 these people
 Were wiser for themselves than we were and the film spiders who
 sold and seduced them.

For who has seen save by flashes at sunrise and sunset, the color
 and flowering of heaven?
 Or heard its voices yet but in swift and staggering action of cyclones
 and thunder storms?
 But we all see the stars at night on a screen of essential reality.
 And we went out beneath them, and planned for Paris as we walked
 through it.

Santa Fé

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HOTEL DE OLID

We have called it a bleak old barracks, but it belongs to us.
It is bright enough when it waits for the midnight train from Lamy,
Gleaming from blackness like a porter's teeth in a desert-bound
Pullman,
And like the car an ante-room to kings and queens that travel in-
cognito.

Youth lay awake here all night devising miracles,
Love slept softly at last the happiest night of its honeymoon,
Romance marched up and down shadowy corridors marking mountains
by moonlight.
Adventure stirred to a sunrise, and death the great adventurer set
spurs at twilight.

History wrote new pregnant lines, and staged strange meetings above
stairs.
Politics played queer tricks whenever the state legislature was in
session.
Art could color its own, and science came seeking fossil wonderlands,
And keys to the truth of life that lived and died here before Columbus
came and Coronado.

And the common people came, as still they come today,
To the winning of the West and the magic that still thrills in it.
And the townsfolk came to meet their friends and speed their parting.
Where once they danced all night, and nodded to eternal after dinner
orators.

We have come from the dust of the desert and wallowed in its big
white bath tubs.
We have loafed and written picture post cards, and scanned Indian
blankets and pottery.
We have thrilled to news of war and peace, and idly wondered
Who was that man in miner's boots, and the girl with a face like
Faustina's twin sister.

One night the lobby looked like a bank of life and a clearing house.
People came and went, and put tired bodies and souls in deposit.
To withdraw them next morning or three days later from vaults of
sleep and of silence.
Once it seemed to us like a club of the country we stood in on
sufferance.

THE OLD ADOBE

A brown mud box some one dumped by the side of the street,
 It stands where time left it and fancy forgot it,
 With two smeared windows that squint on each side
 Of a dark and toothless door and a doorstep that sags like a lip.

But childrens' eyes look out of its windows still,
 People coming and going are a daily bread to it.
 And the breath and the sound of life still comes from it,
 Where two old women in dusty black stand by the sagging sill and
 and whisper in the shadows.

They stand in the shadow of the past and smile at it.
 They are living in longing and memory that walks with it,
 Through the dear, dead days that are gone, now dearer than ever.
 And the very voice and soul of the past that is pain and prophesy,
 Stirs the dim lips that slowly part and smile at life and repeat:
 "Buenos dias Señor. si, buenos dias Señor."

Santa Fé

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PENITENTES

Ten half naked men are marching,
 Like boys following their leader, flogging themselves,
 In a staggering file down a stony trail near Taos.
 Their yucca scourges drip and their drawers drip red on the stones.
 Their brown backs are raw and rutted and slowly shuddering
 With writhing nests of red snakes that feed and breed on them,
 Like writhing snakes of blood in brains beating to bursting.

Little gray snakes of pain writhe and strike
 In wild brown faces set and distorted like masks
 Of something starker than bull-fights, burnings and rackings,
 That persist and insist in pain's surgeons and Inquisitors.
 This is the torture of self linked breath by breath, stride by stride,
 stroke by stroke,
 Like the intimate tearing torture of lovers begetting birth pangs,
 With the shuddering torture of brothers in blood's burning sacrament.

Their women follow, and shudder or thrill to them.
 Children follow and whimper, but half grown boys are burning to begin.
 Mothers look on and loathe it and women unwedded and ripe,
 Fear and hate a greater cruelty than women's cruelty,
 And a redder ritual than any woman's ritual,
 And a wilder madness than any woman's madness,
 As they march to the cross that stands at the end of their road of
 the cross.

There for a moment of suffering and torment,
 Beside men and boys who gash themselves with cactus and writhe
 on heaps of it,
 The supreme personage in this drama of pain that is older than all
 actors,
 Pain and the will to pain that is old as blood is,
 Old as the heart of life that stirs and beats and throbs and flogs
 in men and women,
 Pulsing through their lips and tongues, and breasts and fingertips,
 Through their maddest emotions and passion's pale and poignant
 intensities of tenderness:
 Christ's old prototype, alive and adored today, Good Friday, in his
 valley by Taos,
 Naked and ecstatic, is waiting for the rest of them.

SANTA FE FORENOON

The foothills are striped with long shadows of little pinyon trees.
 They are brindled, tufted, sleek and rounded.
 And they seem to stretch ever so little,
 Like cats half asleep in the sun—one yawns at me.

The little brown adobe houses perched between their paws,
 Love them and cuddle closer to the earth they grow from.
 The road to the canyon rising slowly and twisting,
 Lies like a piece of tangled fishing line they have tired of playing with.

A lizard in the sun slides past with a flicker of his tail,
 And a little river in a crease of the hills glides by as silently.
 The grease-wood is gray again. Its yellow flowers have faded
 To the tint of the cottonwoods faintly turning and barely swaying
 Above gray trunks that dusty brown and tawny bronchos browse
 between.

And my thoughts are yawning thoughts that browse with them,
 Past the smell of ripening apples in the orchards and the grease-wood
 by the wayside,
 Past the purple lustre of cabbages in the garden where our red hens
 are hunting,
 Past a dark green tide of alfalfa lapping past fence post after fence
 post,
 Up to the red hillside of the stone crusher where the picks of convicts
 flicker on the skyline.

On the brown road ruled between the green alfalfa edge, and pinyon
 trees that tuft the ridge,
 Two Mexican women in thin black skirts and shawls are tracking
 to town.
 And behind them a brown boy and three gray burros,
 With firewood bound round backs and flanks in huge brown horse
 shoes go silently.
 And the whole is a frieze as old as the brown and umber vases of
 Mycenae and Corinth—and older.

There is a patina of days of dust and slow delight on this pattern of
 the world today.
 There is a gray glaze like the glaze of olives and old olive trees in
 Italy on this brown and sun-burned pottery,
 A gray glaze and patterning of shadow on walls and stones,
 On garden soil and roadside and hillside.

And higher than all, and harder and softer in day's mirror
 There burns a blue flame, cloudless and flawless, stirless and
 mellowing
 The earth and all that grows from her, the yellow apples on the bough
 beside me,
 And a million aspens turning yellow at last on a huge round shoulder
 toward Truchas.

And a mountain that I love, like a girl half waking,
 Thrusts from the crumpled folds of the foot hills' spotted coverlet,
 An elbow white and shining as the snows the clouds come close to,
 And yawns—as she smiles—at me at the top of the morning.

THE TOWER

There is no cloud in the world today.
 And the sky is blue beyond belief or desire,
 Blue light that knows no shadow; the horses stand motionless
 High in the middle of the mountains, on the top of the tower of the
 world.

Round us the ranges run and eddy and circle.
 Could one but creep past the last and peep from the parapet
 Into the splendor of space without shadow or mist:
 One might see stars for pebbles around the rounded rim, and the
 hollow below it
 Of a pool of clear spring water with his own soul for a still face in it.

This is the tower of Maya; they pitched the blue sky for a tent on it.
 And round the parapet sleeping lie the last shapes of illusion;
 Mountain on mountain mixed and asleep in the sun's vast, silent
 seraglio;

Everywhere breasts and hips of women, shoulders and flanks,
 Stirless, strong and remote, the mothers of mothers forgotten and
 older

Than the first flower that bloomed or the first river that ran.

One could see sea nymphs there, bathing and basking,
 Shapes that swim in the light and float on blue air like foam.
 On the verge of the surf of the ranges where the great earth waves
 gather,

Billow and come like combers suddenly frozen and fixed;
 Power and purpose that pulses eternally, shaped and reshaped.

Here the Kindler of stars colored the power of His purpose,
 Drew from the sea its depth of shadow and sunlight,
 Rippled the notes of His song that soars to a snow peak suddenly;
 Falls to a valley and rests; here the Forger of words
 Made for the dumb a sign till the fires of His forging were finished,
 And set it spaciouly forth to wait and bear witness,
 Till the riders awake and arrive at this Vision of Maya's tower.

STILL LIFE

Cold clear dawn on a world that wakes from huddled sleep—
 A wide window sill lifted twelve inches to let in the day,
 Six feet from my pillow at six; white sky, shadow cultures below
 In a long oblong microscope slide that daybreak slowly focuses.

Static imensities emerge through the long blue profile of the main
 range,
 Sloping slowly to the right in a sky line that sings and cannot cease.
 Blue gray valleys of shadow and snow beyond grow more beautiful.
 Below the low brown adobes flatten frosted roofs in parallel planes.

Leafless trees stenciled on the sky line lift to the levels of a massive
 of mountain tops,
 Forming a net work for fancy that waits for birds winging back,
 singing spring—
 Nests growing warm, living leaves of emerald cells netting together in
 new blue April weather.
 Those frozen fringes sway ever so little, as a little cool breeze starts
 to eddy and stir.
 One black bird, drifting down dawn, lights on a bare bough; and the
 sap stirs underneath.

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STAR SPRAY

My cot is set in the midst of mountains and stars.
The mountains are dull and low on a sky line flattened by starlight.
The stars are too many to count or confute, and I turn from them
To a peach tree, half stripped, that stands in the center of our orchard.

Our orchard is a garden of dreams, of stars tangled in fruit trees.
They are sheep caught in thickets,
They are apples of silver that shine,
They are birds that have homed to new nestings.
They are silver ships stranded in shadowy bays with jungles joining
far margins.

Our orchard is a garden of truth, and star spray in fruit trees,
Like light filtered through to sea slugs on sea weeds in rock pools
 where the surf crashes thundering.
For we live in the shadow of a wave of all life that curls and imperils
 and impends.
And we live in the hollow of a pulsing of being that is breaking
 and rending us.

And jungles and sheep folds, passage of birds and landfalls of sailors
are all crushed together and constrained
To the urge of an impulse that throbs overarching, and stresses far
forelands of night,
Where meteors and stars are the froth and the foam of a comber of
midnight that menaces
Earth and our orchard and island that crumbles, assailed
By the crash and the gride of the drift of the stars, and the beat of the
surf of all being.

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WINTER MIDNIGHT

There are triptyches, panels, lunettes, in Holland, Paris, Italy;
 That one might rent for a million or more for a life time.
 But I could give them all if some painter would paint me perfectly
 All that I see these moonlit nights from my tent's east gable,
 In two tall triangles my leaning tent pole parts and marries.

It is all silver and white, gray and black with browns in it like half-
 charred charcoal;
 The tent and the pole and the stubble of the field in the foreground,
 The stripped fruit trees of the orchard with stars stabbing through
 them,
 The white wreaths of snow that climb higher and farther through the
 foot hills,
 And a lean sky line climbing past thin branches to a star poised
 near a peak in fathomless grayness.

It is all silent, cold and still.
 And I wake and dream and wake to it again,
 Till a faint gleam of gold from the forecourt of morning
 Thrills in a gray adobe window to the right of me,
 And flashes and beckons to the sunrise,
 Waiting and welling behind that slate gray eastern range,
 Waiting to leak and to flow and to flood and to pour past the peaks
 and the passes.

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WINTER MORNING

The sky is as gray as the glass of the studio window,
The telephone wires are thin black lines against it.
The trees are as thin and gray and brown
As sea weed in rock pools unstirred by one ripple.

The 'dobes huddle into the hillside,
Lying low and lean like a hungry dog asleep with his nose to the
ground,
A spotted dog that is dirty white with the snow that still falls on him.
The pinyons are almost black and as cold as the rest of him.

A black wagon rolls slowly down the white road to Santa Fé,
With four small Mexicans huddled in cloaks and the driver's hands
clutching like claws.
Two dun cows and a brown horse browse in the greasewood by the
river
Sucking the dry dugs of earth, and their throats throb with the
weight of her.

A yellow dog snuffs out a cold trail through the greasewood,
The gray greasewood with snow-white flowers that bloomed afresh
this morning.
A black broncho in a gray blanket with a trailing lariat runs kicking
and bucking to the river,
Trying to buck off the blanket of gray silence that sinks and wraps
the world today,

Nine blackbirds, like living notes escaped from the scale of slim bars
Of frost rimed telephone wires, are darting and dancing
Against the wide gray sky and the high white hillside,
Like soaring chords of a song that leaps and lilts and persists:
As swinging, singing wings beat up against the thin and slowly sifted
snowflakes.

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WINTER NOON

Gray Leg wound on and up in a snail shell spiral,
 Round a round brown hill that looked to me like a sea snail.
 He dipped down through a high arroyo of snow and red rocks.
 He slipped on the cold north side of a horse shoe ridge that rose,
 Like a giant fossil from the sea, stranded and frozen on top of the
 foot hills.

He found an old trail that angled faintly.
 And he sawed back and forth and he jerked on and up,
 Past little red rocks and little green trees and white patches of snow,
 With his brown sides heaving and his heart beating between my legs
 when we halted.
 We started again and we mounted past the last brown bulge of the
 ground.
 And I swung him around to the west at last, and we watched all
 time together.

We stood on the scarp of the world, and below us
 A wide brown beach spread past red buttes like rocks tumbling
 seaward.
 Below on upland levels toward Bernalillo the snow lay white and
 shining,
 Like sea sand wet by tides and sea ice thrusting landward
 Past snow-capped rocks that were the peaks of farther ranges.
 And the sun blazed out on it in golden channels like fiery water
 flowing and rending the floe pack.
 Beyond lay the lights and shadows and snow berg summits of still
 greater ranges.

And the sun rose higher and higher.
 And the tide of life like liquid fire was widening,
 As the tide of white before it rose and widened,
 Rose from the sea and spread and fell in air waves whose fringes
 were snow flakes.
 The sun at noon blazed down on a snow fringed rock pool
 That the sea once made; and the waves of a greater sea
 That washed the whole world like an island when time was a babe
 in its womb,
 And the glaciers were the scouring of the long slow surf in it.
 And the ocean today is the dregs and blue ooze of it.

The clear air fresbened around us,
 And played with Gray Leg's mane and our nostrils widened.
 My eyes widened and my thought grew greater at the sense and the
 thought of it
 As the world grew wider, and the air grew wider, and life grew
 greater interminably,
 Till all the sea was one rock pool;
 And main ranges low rock ridges of New Mexico under the sea,
 That plainsmen blindly believed long since had deserted us;
 The sea that was here, and is here, and will be
 When earth like a wave-washed rock topples down to be ground round
 to atoms.

And I saw the sun in the sky, and I saw new clouds in blue water,
 Little light flecks of foam, each slight and white as a snow flake.

And I knew that this snow was the froth of one wave in an eddy's
 little tumult of air.
 And I breathed in one breath and one drop of a wave wide as ocean
 and wider,
 That lifts to the light of the sun, and ebbs to the deepest pits of night,
 And knows neither tide marks nor margin beside or beyond them;
 That leaves our gray mountains like tangled tide ridges of sand,
 For a day on the way of all living, on the quest and unrest of the sea
 born slow spirit of man.

Santa Fé

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THE RIDE HOME

We rode home last night by the river.
 Turning to the right at the Iron bridge with its frost rimed planks,
 We galloped by high banks till your flying shadow was lost
 In the matted shade of leafless ranks of willows.
 And I watched you bend and sway as Gray Leg fbreaded through them.

We forded narrow channels where cold water gleamed and wavered
 Through a waste of sand and scrub where your shadow toiled like the
 feet of the horses,
 Through shapeless pools of dusk as cool and dry and shifting as sand,
 Where the shadows of the rocks were painted on white ice rims and
 snow islands,
 On the edge of a grease-wood pasture: and once more the willows
 swallowed us.

We emerged in the middle of a valley that widened and climbed,
 Rising softly to meet the mountains as your breast sometimes breathes
 to them.
 And the moon was an open well head with all the silver in heaven
 Spilling straight down on your spurs and the bits of your bridle,
 Rippling away with the wash of the river, and the starlight leaked
 through it.

I let you ride before me: I wanted to watch you.
 With your slim ,straight back and shoulders, boylike and beautiful
 As your body that gripped your horse and silently swayed him;
 So your spirit sways your heart; you rode and you never looked back.
 And I followed your shadow that followed you, and loved it.

Through a corridor of mountains that opened on the stars
 We rode without speaking a word and all the while we were drinking in
 The silver flood of moonlight that made the night a miracle.
 And I wanted to go straight on and follow you
 Riding forever through space to the rim of the range and beyond.
 There in the air was our empire, and there we went riding,
 Riding on the moonlight rim of a planet that galloped through the
 night.

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RITO DEL FRIJOLES

The Spaniards called it Pajarito because they saw the
Greater colonies of swallows' nests in taller mud banks,
Where caves star the cliffs and the canyons run to the river.
But something stronger and stranger lingers here like an echo,
Like the sound of dry waters that run below these last year's nests
of stone.

The winds first sang here, dancing on rock pools and dizzy ledges.
They ground grit in rock crevices in airy whirlpools.
The caves grew and remained till men found and fashioned them.
There was a sound of chipping of stone on stone, and of fragments
falling.
There was a sound of felling of trees with stone axes.
There was a hoisting of vigas home and a building of balconies.

The women ground blue corn in querns and sang to the grinding.
They made sandals of cactus fibre and wove baskets of reeds and
grasses.
The hunters brought deer meat home and the old men dried it.
Boys stoned rabbits, girls made warm robes from furry skins sewed
fast with sinews.
Men found eagles' feathers that they traded for turquoise and obsidian
for arrow heads.
They made their first black pots from snakes of clay coiled outward
and upwards.
They harnessed the river with trenches, they stabbed the earth and
pitted it with seed corn.

They made ladders of tree trunks that leaned and led to their great
high cave of ceremony,
With its rock half dome that shadowed the stone kiva they built there,
Round and barely above ground like a bird's nest till they covered it,
Lest any should lightly see their threshold to the underworld,
Sunk in the center of the floor, that spirits like serpents come crawling
through.

They were primitive people, closer than today to their origins.
Their racial memories reached to days when the first birds were flying
snakes with scales, and men fought them with flints and sling
stones.

They pictured birds on their pottery, they carved them on rocks and cliffs in petroglyphs.

They saw serpents in the windings of rivers and the twistings of trails. The Avanyu, the great winged serpent, was the guardian of all springs and water sources.

When he was angered they dried and men died, and his ways were past determining.

They worshiped the eagles that fed on serpents before the Aztecs, their fathers, revered them.

They were a bird-like people who fled from the tribes of the plains of torment.

But steel and powder flew faster, and the swift horses of the Spaniards rode at them.

On them Apaches and Navahoes who had crawled like serpents stalking them, were winds to winnow them.

They cut the trails to the fields, and the water trails and the hunting trails.

Meanwhile the Avanyu was angered, and the water died and the people died.

For they had no wings like the birds who flew to new nests and full drinking pools.

The sky was blue above them, cloudless, rainless, merciless.

The rocks were as hard as before and as gray with no help or hope in them,

The sun was bright as before, and it burned and tortured them.

The snow was white when it fell like one breath of cool air on the fire of their fever and hunger.

The wind was as free as before on wild nights when it hooted and yelled at them.

The birds were free as before, their song was as sweet as before and rarer and dearer.

And the last lovers clasped lean hands and lips, and the last old women wailed for the last child of the tribe and the ending of all things.

The last water went with the last echo of its falling, the last fire fell with the last eyes that looked at it.

And the serpents of shadow silently stole into the place and possessed it;

Till the white man came at last and cleared out drift-filled caves, and filled the empty city with his dreams of it.

CORN DANCE, SAN DOMINGO

Motors are planted in ranks in gray dust by a dusty gray church.
 Motors are plowing the roads from Santa Fé to Bernalillo.
 Horses are dancing along the dusty roads through the sand hills,
 Indians on sorrel and paint ponies come trotting down distant trails.
 Mexican teams and toy burros are pushing through the crowd on foot
 to the Fiesta.

Mass is still being sung; through the open door one discerns
 Shadowy worshippers kneeling and rising in ranks to slow chanting.
 Mexicans set up shop in stands, south of the Plaza and sell
 Candy, quirts, cigarettes, soap, Navajo bracelets and rings and raw
 turquoise.
 Indian women in dim doorways lift mottled pottery and toy bows
 and arrows.
 Children bring firewood and apples, and smoke rises fast from gay
 chimney pots.

In the great square of South and North, of the summer and winter
 peoples,
 The crowd is gathering and black heads are showing in hatchways
 of kivas,
 Like huge butt ends of logs protruding from earth and coated with it.
 Ladder ends slant from low tops with red feathered pennants at their
 tips.
 The church disgorges at last a crowd chromatic and intense.
 More and more heads of dancers are massed on kiva tops, looking
 around.
 Past the throng on the ground to strangers and friends crowning long
 roofs and crowding strong ladders.

Domingo's Koshare appear like old heralds of tribal tradition.
 Green corn sheaves bound round their ears, black spots daubed on
 white bodies.
 North, South, East and West they start to report the land is safe for
 the harvest.
 One by one they return to begin the abundant fun of full harvest,
 When old gray grandsires frisk and grin, and each bin is full of
 speckled blue ears;
 And good spirits have smiled on the harvest.

Three hundred men and women begin to dance the great dance of the harvest.

They come pair by pair in line like planted corn and they hold green sprigs of pine.

And the rattle of elk teeth rattles and silvery sleigh bells simulates, The cackle of the pregnant corn in great heat, and the swish of winds like the swish of flames through corn fields.

The women's black blankets are earth, and the long tassels of the men's trailing waist scarves

Are trailing tassels of corn that is born of the heat of the harvest.

They shuffle like the first slow days of faint green growth of the harvest.

They circle and eddy as the suns and shadows of green growing circle and eddy;

They stamp with furred feet and claws of wild things that crept and ran through the ranks of the harvest.

They tramp with the dull weight of days that bore down hour by hour in great heat.

And always the turpouise green tablitas, tall woolen tiaras of the dancing women,

Are the blue green tips of growing corn, and swaying flickering spear heads of harvest.

They halt like the sultry heat of high noon in mid summer, When the corn grows high though all earth is still, and stands still as it grows;

Till a wave of slow chanting and clamor of long drums stirs them again As low thunder stirs a sultry sky, and low drumming of rain comes closer and closer,

To hearts that beat high in July growing glad in the hope of the harvest.

All day they advance and retreat through the heat of the dance of the harvest:

Till the last motor rolls away, the last cowboy rides away, and the Mexican and Navajo riders,

Like a painted frieze that flamed above the horses' heads, and the dancers' tablitas,

Are scattered like colors of sunset; and the Plaza lies shadowed and dun:

And the last old Indian woman lets down her rusty sun umbrella,

And lets herself heavily down a long and dusty ladder,

To the feasting already begun, in glad homes of corn harvesting.

THE HERITAGE

She wanted to go to a hut hospital on the western front.
 Because she got sick herself they would not let her.
 Then came the influenza, and in the midst of it
 She found a western front of her own, right here at home,
 Somewhere in northern New Mexico.

Some of us know New Mexico as a land of beauty,
 A land of color, of romance, of mountains and mystery,
 A place for hunting, fishing, riding, climbing and motoring;
 A land of prehistoric ruins and ruins since the Spaniards came,
 Of cliff dwellings, terraced houses, Pueblo dances and dim rituals;
 A land of rattlesnakes and sage brush and red and black traditions,
 Of grim Penitentes who scourge and crucify themselves afresh on each
 Good Friday.

Few of us know New Mexico as a land of squalor and gray ignorance,
 Of hidden villages and lone adobes where life is hard as it was in the
 ages of flint and of bronze,
 Of little efforts to live as pitiful as winter starved horses
 Wandering through spring time, staggering and dying
 In the running of new waters and the blossoming of fruit trees,
 In the blue of April's beauty and her showers of pink and white.

But she knew them because they belonged to her;
 Hard by the valley of beauty, around the bend in the road,
 In the shadows of low foot hills in the windings of little rivers,
 In the sands of parched arroyos and dry ditches where the sickness
 lay heavy on the land.

Little pitiful stories came to her by word of mouth,
 Of dead and dying mothers and babies starving and neglected,
 Of infected houses and infected wounds and sores that spread as the
 sickness spread,
 And because she cured one, and word of it spread, they sent for her
 and trusted her;
 People who never know a doctor from birth to death, because there
 are no doctors to seek them out and succor them;
 People who live and die as the beasts die,
 People who yet are human and remember her and love her.

She went with her mother and her little brown horse and mountain
 wagon,
 And her big knitting bag full of bandages and pads, lysol and aspirin
 and little bottles and tubes.
 She went with a white mask soaked in alcohol, and a love that was
 her whiter disinfectant.
 And they could not see her face clearly, but they knew the light in
 her eyes.
 And they felt the healing in her hands in the shadows of dark houses
 and adored her.

She went by day and night, in the magic of the moonlight on the
 mountains,
 Through the splendor of blue days, and golden sunlight glad and
 dear as the warm breath of life itself.
 Through a mountain world, and a warm mould of beauty that was
 made for beauty and belonged to her,
 Through a moonlit world of cooler, tenderer shadows of the truth
 that beauty barely breathes and promises.
 And from it all she took them something lasting in herself that they
 believed in and remember,
 Part of her heritage and theirs that life's true lovers share in shadowed
 sacraments in France and somewhere on life's lonliest firing line.
 This is the only real religion in the world that men and women live
 and love and die by and remember.

Santa Fé

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THE TRAIL MENDER

We came back from the summit where snow rifts in August.
 We scraped past rock stairs, we slithered over shale slopes.
 We thrashed through aspen thickets where the horses nipped dry
 grasses.
 We stroked down the spine of a ridge and stopped to tighten cinches.

We slid down guttered channels where the trail angled sharply,
 And twisted and snarled through great gnarled roots that held it
 clinging
 To the sides of a funnel in the hills; we plunged down shuddering
 sand slopes,
 Till Puye stretched his steaming neck to the gleam of a stream in
 a canyon.

Here there was quiet stirred alone by the splash of water that rippled
 From rock pool to rock pool; from shade pool to shade pool we
 threaded,
 Where the cotton woods stand in gray islands in seas of green grasses.
 And the trail wound brown between them, shining and warm in the
 sun.

Near a six-inch ditch that brings living water from the Rito
 Round a harsh hill shoulder evenly, we saw a lunger at work.
 Slowly he stooped, and with infinite care he pried and he lifted at
 A little dry pine tree wind-cast across the trail in the night.
 We were past before he had levered it down hill to suit him.
 I looked back and saw him picking up stones and trimming trailing
 branches

That slap one straight in the eyes, and stooping again and again.
 And every line of his tired body was a line of life's gospel telling me:

"Others may tread the high trails, taking earth by the throat on the
 way.

They may breathe in half the sky at one stride but I cannot.
 They may seize the summits in turn like posts boys vault past at
 leap-frog,
 And watch all the wonder of the world suddenly spread at their feet,
 but I may not.

Others scrape hand holds to see lightnings splintered on lone summits,
 Or feel the flail of hail and sleet on razor-edged ridges; but I
 Am grateful that life lets me live by great trees and green glades and
 bright waters,
 Smoothing the way for the weak, and the strong that stumble and
 trip in the night."

On the trail we all are keepers of.

GOATS

White, gray, brown, black, the goats track by together,
Blending over and flowing around baby arroyos and humps in the
hills,

Like a brindled patch on the hide and the play of lean muscles on
the back

Of a sharp-nosed dog that pens them in the open persistently.

They browse by old trails and the strength of the earth flows into
them.

The blue sky, the brown hills and the gray weeds are one with them.
The she-goats chew their food and the sagging udders are filled,
And the dog and his master are drift on the weight of the wave that
moves with them.

It ripples through worn channels and runnels in the hills.
And the tide turns back at twilight and the goats go home again,
With white milk for brown babies, white sunlight liquid and warm.
And the strength that they strained out of chinks in the rocks is
strained again

Into little, glad, greedy lips that lap, till the lips of brown mothers
drink love deeply.

Santa Fé

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COYOTE

He howls in the hunger of winter,
 Where a starved moon sinks into nothingness,
 Near an earth scabbed with shadow and leprous
 With livid patches of silver along her thin shoulders and flanks.

He howls as a leper howls
 When health and wholeness and human touch are taken from him.
 He howls as evil men must howl in evil dreams,
 Seeing lost happiness they maimed and murdered.
 He howls as a blind man howls when his eyes are put out.
 He howls as madmen howl at shifting shapes that trick and betray
 them.
 He howls as devils howl when Hell damns the innocent.

He howls when the earth is sick and mad in wan winter moonlight,
 When ghosts walk thick, and wake and stir at the sound
 Of his long, laughing, walling mocking, yelling ululations.
 He howls like a leper, a devil, a dead man, a blind man, a bad man,
 a mad man.
 He howls with the wailing of the winds and low laughter of snow
 trolls that rick men to murder them.

Santa Fé 12 8 18

PROCESSIONAL

Coming down hill from Casa Pintada, past the Acequia Madre,
Suddenly appeared at the end of the street plodding down Canyon
Road,

Five little white brides of Mary in procession, two women in black
walked behind them;

Five little girls bearing flowers in glass vases, and two women with
yellow candles in their hands.

Carrying candles in white and red bouquets, candles unlit the shade
of pale gold;

Going in golden sunlight to the great church of St. Francis. they
went down through brown dust, through the mothers' month of
May

To the motherhood of Mary, of our Lady of Love who smiles mildly
On all mothers and girls who go to her, and those others whose
smiles is spring.

Santa Fé

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THE DIMPLE

I have learned to love this land,
 As one loves the body of a woman one begins to possess,
 And the clouds in the skies that change and make her subtle and
 wonderful.

I love the swells and the troughs like the sea of her sky line,
 The sudden hollows and circling eddies of earth lying sunken and
 shadowed
 By the crest of the ranges.

One day I found a dimple in the earth with flowers that thrilled in it,
 Behind a hill that hid it like yesterday's dear secret.
 And I made it a shadowy, dreamy funnel of delight and of peace that
 poured into me.

Why should people think it any more shameful to love
 The dimples in a woman's body, behind her knees, below her shoulders,
 And in every fair and fertile fold of her;
 Than those in her cheeks and her chin?

Santa Fé 3 4 17

THE SPRING

The springs are hard to find
 In this old brown land of ours.
 But I know one that I found one day in November,
 High on the breast of a hill
 Heaving out of canyon,
 Like the heaving breast of the girl that climbed that trail with me,
 Till we fell on our faces side by side and kissed the still water together.

There were grains of brown sand in the still round basin,
 Cool and blue as the skies and her eyes with brown flecks in them,
 Looking out on a widening vista of space and of splendor,
 And a riot of red and gold, aspens and oak scrub that climbed to us;
 All the leaves of the year burning up for us,
 To warm our Indian summer,
 As all the year's waters were strained
 To make that cup cool for us.

If I could find that spring again,
 And see her face again,
 Grave and glowing and good for me
 As the taste of that water was good for me,
 And feel the clasp of her hand
 As we climbed the rocks to the summit of the range;
 I could go back with her again
 To the days of life's beginning
 When we lay with our lips at the breast of the mother of all,
 Guiltless of sinning or sorrow or desire,
 And happy as children are happy.

Santa Fé

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LOST LAKE

Two snow peaks looked down on it over their shoulders,
 As it lay in a green pit below them.
 And it smiled for one hour each day
 When the sun stooped straight down and kissed it.

More still and cool than cloistered nuns and novices,
 It lay in the shade of the pine trees and mirrored stars more constantly
 Than any lake in the world, and the shadows guarded it.
 Many have fought to find it and failed for a lifetime.

One I caught, looking down from my tallest snow peak's shoulder,
 The gleam of its water at noon, and I left all the world at my feet.
 And I went crashing down, thrashing down, through shale and aspens
 and pines
 Straight to the mark that I missed; and must climb to discover it
 again.

Once in the eyes of a child that was a woman for a moment,
 As the sun warmed her and waked old and strange pregnant appeals,
 I caught a light like the smile of Lost Lake, and I lost it
 When her heart that was hardly awake, lay asleep in the shadows
 again.

Santa F* 12 11 18

TESUQUE CHURCH

A blue square of sky with two bells in it
 Is fretted in the wedge of a lean white-washed gable.
 Below through a great gray square of shadow
 A woman in a pale blue blanket leans and looks out of the door.

Beyond and above the flat white facade is blueness illimitable.
 And the great black and white bulk of the main range builds
 toward it.
 And the high white dome of Baldy, rounded and fuller than Fuji's
 high note of ecstasy,
 Swells to the greater dome of the sky's blue beauty forever and ever.

Below on the steps of the church a row of Indian women and
 children,
 Two, doll-like, Japanese, red and remote, with eyes obliquely ob-
 livious,
 One in a purple shawl with a face like a fate intent and terrible;
 All with hard heavy black bangs falling low down brown foreheads
 are watching the dancing.

Santa Fé 12 27 18

THE CABIN

The cabin has yellow log walls and a front porch with a hammock in it,
 And a great gray stone fire-place built into the side hill at the back.
 There are two big beds by the fire; and two long low windows be-
 side them

Look up and down the valley of a river that slips through the arms
 of the hills.

There is a row of books on the mantel that I made there.
 A row of pegs in a corner supports sweaters, slickers, frayed riding
 breeches and fisherman's waders.

There is a typewriter on a table beside papers, newspapers, magazines
 and a cribbage board.

There are trout rods, rifles, quilts on the walls, and webbed snow
 shoes for winter.

There is a bay horse who puts his white nose through my window
 each morning I wake,

And a black and white dog who sleeps on the foot of my bed every
 night, and shakes hand with me.

There is a gray squirrel with fringed ears that cracks nuts on my
 mantel piece.

And a boy who comes and plays cribbage with me, and finds worms
 for my fishing.

All these are good in their way, and I manage to live with them,
 Like the pines on the mountains that march to the sky, and the
 river that runs to the ocean.

But they all point to something above and beyond and inscrutable.
 They have taught me to reach out and take hold of life, and to tell
 of her.

They have taught me to wake in the moonlight and want her,
 And to see in the shadow by the foot of my bed her small pair of shoes,
 And a little, light lacy heap on a chair, like a cloud half asleep in
 the moonlight,

And a little gray gauntlet unmated all day on my table reaching to me.

Sometimes I see it when I ride laid lightly on Gray Leg's shoulder.
 Sometimes I feel those little brown shoes in my hands when we
 climb the high trails.

Sometimes I hear a voice that is tuned to the whisper of winds and
 the song of the river.

Sometimes I see on the summits a face that the flush of the sunrise
 foretold.

Sometimes when I write I feel two finger tips sealing my eyelids,
 Or someone saying "Who am I? Where am I?" with the ghost of a
 kiss when the fire dies,

Or a warm little hand half awake that reaches for mine when I wake
 from dim dreams in the midnight.

But I think she comes closest of all when her profile is sculptured
 in shadow,

And her feet falter closer to our cabin while we count the first stars
 in the skies.

THE SANTA FE TRAIL

The high plains were a stage for it, the rolling prairies gave its tempo.
The mountains were its climax, the desert its insistence,
On this trail that tied together the tie ribs of a nation,
This new wild folk migration that went traveling with the sun.

By salt buffalo wallows, beside slow running rivers,
Past mountain passes threaded by big horns and wild stallions,
Over mesas gray with grease-wood, by foot hills cactus spined,
Where snow that flecked the desert left blind stains from day to day:

Across the great arena between Missouri and the Rockies,
Past black stains of death's dark foot prints across the dreary plains,
Where they burned brave men and women in the ashes of wrecked
 wagons,
And Apaches and Kiowas, Utes and Sioux tore off their scalps:

Where highwaymen murdered men who rode in low ox-carts and raw
 new Concord coaches,
Mexicans killing Gringos, and Gringos scalping Greasers like Indians,
Where they buried bags of silver by tall trees on shallow river islands,
And came back to find them sometimes; where they marked the trail
 with graves:

Where the red men tumbled their war chiefs on lofty sapling scaffolding,
Wrapped in furs they stripped from women waiting underneath in
 winter to follow them,
Where trappers piled up stones upon their silent partners lest the
 wolves should paw them out,
Where blizzard-whitened mounds grew flat as sodded graves grow
 flat more slowly:

Where the pack trains bore charred corpses on their sweating mules
 and horses,
And Comanches with trained bell mares yelled, and shot stampeding
 them at night,
Where ox-trains plodded steadily, and babes were born in canvas tilts
 to fill their thinning ranks,
And men made love to women like lovers on sinking ships:

Where the buffalo ran in rivers on their northward spring migration,
 Black rivers splitting past still wagons like rocks, wild rivers stamp-
 eding, black rapids overwhelming them;
 Where red rivers of prairie fires swept past the trail and wiped it
 out,
 Till men trod out the ashes in the ruts that time had worn:

Where their escorts trotted in ragged ranks to the New Mexico bor-
 der line,
 Bearded dragoons in dull blue coats and dusty caps, and Mexican
 lancers in steeple hats and silver tricked trappings,
 Where red-shirted miners, and raw Forty-Niners in newly beaded
 buckskins, sang and shouted, betted and doubted death and tall
 stories,
 And gamblers like black priests of chance tried out their eyes and
 hands:
 Where fat French and Spanish priests and rawboned Moravian mis-
 sionaries
 Met and scowled or smiled at wayside weddings and christenings,
 Where lean New England spinsters stared at Mormon and Indian
 women and fat Latin prostitutes,
 And at last struck hands together by some death-bed, squaw and maid:

The high plains were a stage for it, the rolling prairies swept it
 westward,
 Past the mountains, past the desert, past all suffering and dying to the
 fruit trees of Tesuque and the sunset,
 Where the buffalo ran, and the Indian rode, and the Lancers spurred,
 and the trappers tramped; and the world rolls after them,
 In a new steel folk migration just begun where theirs is done.

THE OLD DIM TRAIL

The old, dim trail is gray and faint as a memory of many years ago.
It sags down past the foot hills like a sick snake in autumn.
It crawls through a shallow valley of bones that are bleached and lusterless.

It sidles into a bone-dry arroyo and wearily heaves itself out of it.
It inches past rock ledges bare and brown as the ribs of earth's rotting carcass.

It is a fading trace of the past and of feet that have no power now to warm or wear it.

It creeps to the loma's edge and laps over it.

It falls into great new gullies that gash and distort it.

Pitching past them, it persists through a shallow wash full of wagon tracks.

Passing fence posts and telephone posts where men staked out two rods of it for a wagon road.

It goes on beside a footpath by a fence at the side of a field,

A field built up in shallow terraces with a gray ditch high and dry at the top of it.

It points to Santa Fé that lies below it,

A city old and gray in the gray dust of November under November skies,

With the crumbling gray adobes in the foreground with their fruit trees,

With its gray roofs in the hollow of its little hidden river,

With one great gray dome that rises higher than the spires of tall poplar trees surrounding it,

And the slow gray spirals floating light against the sullen, high, gray, northern ridge that dominates the whole of it.

It lies there, nestling in the great gray hollow,

Like a city long asleep and barely breathing,

A city of gray ghosts of traders, trappers and trailsmen,

Horsemen and hunters, soldiers and captains,

Padres with their burros, bishops and governors,

Mothers and their children, cowboys, scouts and Indians,

Husbandmen with burdens, and the flocks they drove before them,

Down this old trail that died here like last year's water in dry and dusty ditches,

To be one raveled fringe of a dream of a city forgotten.

Others may delve in the past and dusty pages and parchments in the Old Palace library,

To track life down to the death and old trails to extinction,

Like rivers that sink in the sea and the dead in the midnight.

I and another I know will follow backward and steadily upward.

For every trail leads two ways; past the fence posts and ditches,

Past the arroyos like wounds, and the ledges and bare ribs of earth, and animals,

Past green pinyons like plumes of the great folded wings of the foot hills,

To the tall mountains' gray brows, and the dazzling white veils of the snow peaks.

Up to a past that is older than all earth's dreams and her cities, and new as sunrise this morning.

Up to a sunlight unshadowed by dust; that first trails start for.

THE REVENANT

I sit in the New Museum Patio,
At a long brown, bare writing table, in Santa Fé.
And the cool gray walls are good to me, and the gray shadows
Of the vigas round the courtyard shift and lengthen,
Like the dark green shadows on the green grass plot in the center.

The round, brown pine tree pillars of the cloister stand up sturdily.
They have found peace at last in a place of long and ceaseless silences.
That only the tireless ticking of a typewriter or the foot-fall of a
careless tourist distracts or distrubs.

It is a place of peace and cool repose for people worn threadbare by
the world's vast restlessness
With its open hatchway to Heaven and the sunlight that smiles on
them.

I have sailed on many ships and shall sail again
On blue days and on still days, with their hidden engines throbbing
steadily.

But here in mid land high on the roof of Mountain America,
Ships and the makers and movers of ships are as far from me and as
unfit for me

As they were for the brown Franciscans who planted the brown pine
tree crosses here three hundred years ago.

But they planted the masts and yards of ships wherever they set
them up;

Brown symbols of a world that sails a sea unfathomed and shoreless;
A sea of space and of terror and time, death and midnight and mys-
tery.

For this world is a world of sailors who stand on earth and water
ridges,

And who watch the sky and the winds and the clouds perforce or die
in the din of machines.

So much the West has taught me; and yesterday when I took the
train at Lamy

For the last time in a year or two, perhaps, I loved this mountain
land of ours

More than ever before, it seemed, with its storm that swept down
on us;

Drowning far blue mountain vistas, and the yuccas budded and blooming by the fringes of raw, red arroyos;
 And its high clear nearness to the sky and to space that we sail in forever and forever.

I must go East again to the cities and seaports of all tall mountain voyaging,
 Cities that are sirens painted and purblind, and homes of marred mothers and masters of men.
 I shall go East to be lost for a time in the dazzle of the arc-lights and the coils of tortured subways.
 As a diver toils through a sea wall of surf with strange stars in his eyes, and his heart and lungs tense with laboring,
 I shall come out again in a wide world of air in the far-flung furrows of high snow-crested ranges,
 There on the sinuous crest of the world, in the sun that is life to all living.

Here in this hatchway of time with the blue sky brooding white clouds above me
 And the green earth growing white hollyhocks that bloom in the corners of our courtyard:
 As a sailor sits cross-legged in a calm, dreaming a little as he stitches sails for tomorrow's adventuring;
 I set my stitches of ink on white sails of paper for me or another; and I know
 I shall come back again whatever may meet me tomorrow
 To this West that I love best of all in the still, deep, hidden, human heart of me.
 For when I die the winds of the sky shall bring back here what is left of me.

Santa Fé 7 1 19

TREASURE SEEKERS

Near their studio two friends of ours found scattered potsherds.
They started to look for lost foundations on the loma slope in April
light.

We traced the stone oblong of a house that looked at sunrise as we
looked at it.

Tomorrow I may go there and dig beside them, near the corner or the
crossing of two walls.

We may find treasure of turquoise, or obsidian, spear heads and arrow
heads,

Perfect burial bowls, or a bone flute that lay mute five hundred years,
Yucca fibre wet with sweat, blood or tears that dried to dust.

We must make haste with our digging, while the dream of it all is
stuff of spring.

We who try to paint and write today, may bring to our dead brothers
Something that is good for their ghosts, though we never find an idol
at all;

Never disinter one skeleton; there is treasure on our loma when we
try for it,

Stooping in the shadow of lost walls to make a memory, of a house of
life that stood here four square to sun and storm.

Santa Fé 4 3 21

PUPPETS AND PEOPLE

We had a community theatre here two years ago. Something happened, or failed to happen, and it disappeared. Now we have a new little Art Theatre, intimately narrowing, Fairly efficient—as the French say, the good ever fights with the best.

Clever comedies cleverly staged are all very well in their way. Once every month or two is too long to wait for all we must go without. Someday this community thing will come back to stay in our hearts; we'll wonder at Miracle plays and other plays of many clans in our tribe, and Greek and Spanish dances done as San Domingo does.

V. D. says that nowadays she'd rather see a first magnitude track meet,

Or a big base ball game, breaking hard in the ninth, than most of their minor puppet shows.

V. D. would rather be than act; being what she is, I'm not blaming her. There are times when I prefer tennis to oratorios, and hiking to Bernard Shaw.

"Acting, like dancing, has its use," says V. D.; "So has war when you're keyed up to it.

There are mobs that we hate—but we want to live in a crowd, now and then, going strong;

Something more modern than Greece and minuets, something as big and heart stirring as those mountain tops.

Tragedy poises there, the high plains sustain then—Whitman's men and women, to match all out of doors."

Santa Fé

5 7 21

PUSSY CATS AND CHERUBIM

There are certain rooms upstairs in our museum of art that belong
More to an artist dead and little known than to anyone alive.

People see the pictures, but sunrise and moonlight see more than
Beauregard's beauty slowly spelled

Through the long gallery and the two ante rooms and the corner room
resplendent

With its hand carved and color patterned great vigas and pine fur-
niture, and the tall copper tea urn whose shadow slowly shifts.

"We ought to use this room more," said Vera Deane, one day when
we looked in after lunch.

"In spite of their hand picked lady profiteer patronesses of the sort
that keeps culture to itself.

Once in a while Notabilities arrive, linger in the state, meet our Cap-
ital City.

A Function is arranged; then they throw open the doors of their toy
house of littleness to some of us.

Anyhow they haven't locked them up yet, to keep trippers from Kansas
and Texas in their places.

Men are such egotistic brutes with their treasure houses of small art
strivings

We small town women have to copy them; you will stage your big
book tea elsewhere.

Men and women and artists forever are divided into sharers and
hoarders.

It takes both kinds to go on with; the little ones play safe when
they can.

It takes a big person to get life across from a studio or a tea urn and
stay with it.

Little folks get together in cliques and clubs; they graft on Institu-
tions men have never yet learned to use.

You have a community center of a sort, and a Stranger's Club down-
stairs; be thankful for that.

Hoarders are better than wasters—sometimes—though they put their
Impossible Pussy cats

In our corner Pueblo fire place yonder, and elsewhere; if you get
what I mean.

Life wished social andirons on us as well as warmer things; I like the
dumb ones better; let's go and take a ride."

Half an hour later, by an adobe on the loma, four brown dolls of the dirt

Stared at us speechless till V. D. startled in them symptoms of cherubim starting chuckling.

That night she sighed and told me "They never known how much they miss,

Those club women and culture hoarders, who have one or two, or none at all.

I'd rather share my life with my man and my last born's brothers and sisters' broken playthings.

Toy houses are for fun, my dear, each empty one like empty eyes means tragedy—play Mousorgsky."

Santa Fé

5 6 21

SUNSET—NEW MEXICO

On the loma shoulder by the gray adobe,
Two horses stand by a well head high on the sky line.
The first snow lingers still in a lonely hollow,
Like a handkerchief dropped by a dancer as she hurries.

Scraps of it hide in the creases and cracks of the foot hills.
They are crumpled heaps of clothes that slid past the knees of the
mountains
A hundred thousand thousand years ago, when they began
To make them ready for music whiter than moonlight at midnight.

Twilight is their tire woman, eternally patient.
The shadows are her dusky slaves that slip on tiptoe
Into hidden closets behind the clouds' low curtains,
Into distant corners of far gardens in high ranges' treasure cities,
Bringing the elements of beauty out of dimness for her high and
nightly ritual.

The sunset flames and glows and trembles,
Like an island of opals disintegrating and flooding
Blue lakes with scarlet flakes, and bare gray beaches with reaches
of mirrored amber.
And the sky changes as a woman's gray eyes brighten in a round and
silver banded mirror,
When her face is flushing softly in the light of her own loveliness.

Heaven has lit her footlights,
And lifted up her great drop curtain ever so little.
And here on the edge of her radiance,
Where the dancers' feet begin to beat ever so little to new pulses
stirring them,

The trailing borders of their robes appear;
Ultramarine and crimson, pale green, pearl gray and lilac;
Purple deeper than twilight's own deep hem as she lets fall,
All the flowers that flame and flicker on far mesas for the mazes of
her dance.

All the fruits of all the plantations of earth are glowing together there;
Airy orbs and ardent apples for dream orchards and vineyards, and
red and blue berries bright with dew.
And they tread them under their feet in the harvest vat of the dusk,
and slowly distil
The cool, dark wine of the night that she lifts to the lips of her
dancers.

Twilight swings strings of jewels that fall and flash before their waiting feet;

Rubies, beryls, spinels; topaz, jasper and turquoise;

Sapphires, pearls, opals, emeralds; sardonyx and amethyst;

And dull gray agates at last, like pebbles for the feet of the dancers.

But the feet of the dancers cannot feel either pebbles or apples.

Their feet are of air, their bodies are air, their breasts are air, and their lips that whisper it.

Their faces are phantoms of light and beauty beyond all beauty men image or mirror.

Dreams of the Lord of all Light who made His mountains old women who wait for His singers and dancers;

With their heads in the night where the stars are coronets and tall tiaras and high halos,

Rounding their brows and their throats like falling notes of the song all space is ringing with at sunset

Where high on the loma's shoulder beside their horses by the well head,

A woman and a girl are standing; looking and longing, and listening.

Santa Fé

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18

HIGH SCHOOL TENNIS COURT

A girl with a racket sweeping high, smashing to the back line—
 An arc like a crescent moon inverted—Diana—Valkyrie,
 Swinging speed and stark will to the mark with the weight of a
 war hammer—
 Etched against a skyline of glowing snow peaks and sunset light.

Day grows grayer as she drives duller balls to dimmer corners.
 There is a Woman of the Worlds somewhere who serves spinning
 planets and plunging meteors so;
 Shifting speed and matter through surer meshes that move tomorrow,
 To make the mothers of a nation of men fit to fight forever failing
 light.

Santa Fe 5 8 21

ENVOY

I have come back again to this mountain land I always love,
 After many journeyings, farther east and west.
 I have seen two oceans, and tall cities I am tiring of.
 And the ranges spell long purpose through blue beauty's dome of rest.

The ranges of lost wonderlands men loved and longed for yesterday,
 Where their ghosts go slowly through the dust of dim and distant
 trails;
 And the little winds of morning rise, and dead hearts stir and start
 away.
 And the singing skyline changes till the twilight dulls and fails.

Here is freedom from perdition, in the jangled wills of driven men,
 And sick souls of wasted women, in her high, clear amber light;
 And a timeless gray tradition that old bells twice blessed intone again,
 When the twilight like God's kiss comes down to wish this world
 good night.

Here is solace in sunrises, when her eastern stubborn wall of stone
 Seems to lift to airy altar lights; past timber line and snow
 The shadows some caressing earth; and here a man may lie alone
 With the eye of heaven that warms today, and what the wind may
 know.

There is sound of running water where her hidden rivers glide,
 There are pine trees talking to red rocks, and to any human ear
 That can spell one least still letter of truth her trembling aspens hide,
 And forget those fevered cities while her secrets whisper here.

Santa Fé 5 5 4



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